

An evening with Warren Hinckle III and the ghost of John Scanlan

MOST OF NEW YORK'S many incongruities are economical, as opposed to Washington, where incongruities are also plentiful but are mostly political. In New York, a recently blooming specimen that spans the politico-economic incongruity gap is a monthly magazine named, for reasons few people understand, after an obscure dead Irish pub-crawler, John Scanlan. The maiden issue of Scanlan's appeared on Washington newsstands about three months ago and immediately sold out. The second issue also is long gone. The third, not yet published at this writing, may or may not still be around by the time this is read.

Among other outrages, Scanlan's scorns advertising dollars.

This apparent death-wish is an inspiration of Warren Hinckle III, the former executive editor and associate publisher of Ramparts, the New Left bi-weekly, which is now under new management.

Scanlan's unusual advertising policy is a manifestation of Hinckle's belief that the American press is only as free as its sponsors, the advertisers, wish it to be, and that, in fact, the advertising dollar has the press in a hammerlock that would put a dictatorship to shame: that only the front half of the military-industrial complex is fair game for the press; that a magazine or newspaper that spends as much time fooling around with General Electric as it does with the generals at the Pentagon might as well apply for bankruptcy early so there will be no standing in line when advertising support suddenly collapses.

Furthermore, Hinckle blames the death of Collier's and the Saturday Evening Post, neither one exactly a radical magazine, on the advertising system itself. Advertising is a peculiarly cyclical numbers game: advertisers in search of a medium reflect not so much on what the medium is saying—as long as that isn't directed against them—as on the number of consumers it can reach per dollar spent. Thus, in order to attract advertising, a publication needs a big circulation. In order to support the costs of printing and mailing to reach this big circulation, and the campaigns to build more circulation (the

Down by the bar
at Sardi's restaurant,
the founder of America's
newest magazine
awaits his muse

By Donald Smith

fourth-class mailings one receives offering magazines at half-rates to new subscribers, for example), more advertising is needed. So it goes, in an infinite spiral, until the publication topples over of its own weight.

Hinckle's solution is to disallow advertising and to support Scanlan's on subscriptions and newsstand sales only, a throwback to the principle of the penny press. Only, in these inflated times, the magazine costs a dollar. Hinckle believes that the golden age of muckraking, Lincoln Steffens, Ida M. Tarbell, et. al., was killed by advertising, and he intends to resurrect it.

Hinckle adds a qualifier to his no advertising policy. If he likes an ad, he buys it. That's right. Instead of an advertiser

paying Scanlan's to run an ad, Scanlan's pays the advertiser. This has yet to happen (at least at this writing); but on the back cover of the second (April) issue, there appeared a zany parody of the Lufthansa Airlines advertising campaign theme, "This year, think twice about Germany." Besides the standard advertising copy urging travel in Germany, the parody included photographs of Nazi soldiers giving the fascist salute and a storm trooper lustily whipping a naked lady.

Obviously, much of what Hinckle publishes could never get into the advertising-supported press. An outstanding example of its iconoclasm appeared in the first issue, a story that had been commissioned and then rejected by Playboy magazine. Playboy had assigned Hunter Thompson, the author of the book about the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang in California, to do a profile of the French Olympic ski champion, Jean-Claude Killy. According to Thompson, Playboy refused to run the story because it made fun of Chevrolet, whose cars Killy has been hired to promote, and whose advertising account Playboy has been trying for some time to land. Actually, to say Thompson's story made fun of Chevrolet is like saying it's cold in Greenland. Correct, but understated. The story drips acid in every paragraph. If there was anything Thompson liked about trailing Killy around the auto show circuit, including the airline that shuttled them about, he didn't mention it. It was a masterpiece of articulate misanthropy.

Just as movies serve up things people can't see on television, Scanlan's is looking for stories that are not likely to ever appear in Life or Look, as the report in the April issue on the role of civilian airlines—Pan American in particular—in the Vietnam war. Other offerings have included an account of the aborted invasion of Haiti; a story about the last days of Biafra by Auberon Waugh, the son of the novelist, Evelyn Waugh; a history of political corruption in New Jersey by novelist Tom Fleming; and a horoscope of Richard Nixon drawn by Gavin Arthur, the great-grandson of the 21st President of the